The Dhammapada

Translated by Thomas Byrom

The Dhammapada, an anthology of 423 verses, has long been recognised as one of the masterpieces of early Buddhist literature. From ancient times to the present, the Dhammapada has been regarded as the most succinct expression of the Buddha's teaching found in the Theravada Pali Canon of scriptures known as the Khuddaka Nikaya ("Minor Collection") of the Sutta Pitaka.

Buddhist tradition has it that shortly after the passing away of the Buddha his disciples met in council at Rajagaha for the purpose of recalling to mind the truths they had received from their beloved Teacher during the forty-five years of his ministry. Their hope was to implant the principles of his message so firmly in memory that they would become a lasting impetus to moral and spiritual conduct, for themselves, their disciples, and for all future disciples who would seek to follow in the footsteps of the Awakened One.

With the Teacher no longer among them, the monks found themselves with the responsibility of handing on the teaching as faithfully as possible. Having no written texts to rely on, they did as their ancestors had before them and prepared their discourses for recitation, that is, basic themes were repeated with variations in order to impress the ideas on their hearers. At that time, according to the Sinhalese, the Dhammapada was orally assembled from the sayings of Gautama given on some three hundred different occasions.

Subsequently, several renditions of the Dhammapada in the Sanskrit and Chinese languages came into circulation. Likewise, a number of stanzas are to be found almost verbatim in other texts of the canonical literature, testifying to the esteem in which its content was anciently held. Since first collated, the Dhammapada has become one of the best loved of Buddhist scriptures, recited daily by millions of devotees who chant its verses in Pali or in their native dialect.

It was inevitable that differences in interpretation of teaching as well as of disciplinary practices would arise, with the result that about a century after the First Council was held a second gathering was called to affirm the purity of the doctrine. It was at this Second Council that the Arhats divided into two main streams, namely, the Mahasanghika or "Great Assembly" and the Theravada or "Doctrine of Elders." These gradually developed into the Mahayana or Northern School of Buddhism espoused chiefly in India, Tibet, China, and later Japan, and the Hinayana or Southern School whose stronghold is Sri Lanka, Burma, and the countries of South-east Asia.

(From the Dhammapada Foreword of Dr. Harischandra Kaviratna, with minor adaptations, 1980, Theosophical University Press)

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1. Choices

We are what we think.
All that we are arises with our thoughts.
With our thoughts we make the world.
Speak or act with an impure mind
And trouble will follow you
As the wheel follows the ox that draws the cart.
We are what we think.
All that we are arises with our thoughts.
With our thoughts we make the world.
Speak or act with a pure mind
And happiness will follow you
As your shadow, unshakable.
"Look how he abused me and hurt me,
How he threw me down and robbed me."
Live with such thoughts and you live in hate.
"Look how he abused me and hurt me,
How he threw me down and robbed me."
Abandon such thoughts, and live in love.
In this world
Hate never yet dispelled hate.
Only love dispels hate.
This is the law,
Ancient and inexhaustible.
You too shall pass away.
Knowing this, how can you quarrel?
How easily the wind overturns a frail tree.
Seek happiness in the senses,
Indulge in food and sleep,
And you too will be uprooted.
The wind cannot overturn a mountain.
Temptation cannot touch the man
Who is awake, strong and humble,
Who masters himself and minds the dharma.
If a man's thoughts are muddy,
If he is reckless and full of deceit,
How can he wear the yellow robe?
Whoever is master of his own nature,
Bright, clear and true,
He may indeed wear the yellow robe.
Mistaking the false for the true,
And the true for the false,
You overlook the heart
And fill yourself with desire.
See the false as false,
The true as true.
Look into your heart.
Follow your nature.
An unreflecting mind is a poor roof.
Passion, like the rain, floods the house.
But if the roof is strong, there is shelter.
Whoever follows impure thoughts
Suffers in this world and the next.
In both worlds he suffers
And how greatly
When he sees the wrong he has done.
But whoever follows the dharma
Is joyful here and joyful there.
In both worlds he rejoices
And how greatly
When he sees the good he has done.
For great is the harvest in this world,
And greater still in the next.
However many holy words you read,
However many you speak,
What good will they do you
If you do not act upon them?
Are you a shepherd
Who counts another man's sheep,
Never sharing the way?
Read as few words as you like,
And speak fewer.
But act upon the dharma.
Give up the old ways -
Passion, enmity, folly.
Know the truth and find peace.
Share the way.

2. Wakefulness

Wakefulness is the way to life.
The fool sleeps
As if he were already dead,
But the master is awake
And he lives forever.
He watches.
He is clear.
How happy he is!
For he sees that wakefulness is life.
How happy he is,
Following the path of the awakened.
With great perseverance
He meditates, seeking
Freedom and happiness.
So awake, reflect, watch.
Work with care and attention.
Live in the way

And the light will grow in you.
By watching and working
The master makes for himself an island
Which the flood cannot overwhelm.
The fool is careless.
But the master guards his watching.
It is his most precious treasure.
He never gives in to desire.
He meditates.
And in the strength of his resolve
He discovers true happiness.
He overcomes desire -
And from the tower of his wisdom
He looks down with dispassion
Upon the sorrowing crowd.
From the mountain top
He looks down at those
Who live close to the ground.
Mindful among the mindless,
Awake while others dream,
Swift as the race horse
He outstrips the field.
By watching
Indra became king of the gods.
How wonderful it is to watch.
How foolish to sleep.
The beggar who guards his mind
And fears the waywardness of his thoughts
Burns through every bond
With the fire of his vigilance.
The beggar who guards his mind
And fears his own confusion
Cannot fall.
He has found his way to peace.

3. Mind

As the fletcher whittles
And makes straight his arrows,
So the master directs
His straying thoughts.
Like a fish out of water,
Stranded on the shore,
Thoughts thrash and quiver,
For how can they shake off desire?
They tremble, they are unsteady,
They wander at their own will.
It is good to control them,
And to master them brings happiness.
But how subtle they are,
How elusive!
The task is to quieten them,
And by ruling them to find happiness.
With single-mindedness
The master quells his thoughts.
He ends their wandering.
Seated in the cave of the heart,
He finds freedom.
How can a troubled mind
Understand the way?
If a man is disturbed
He will never be filled with knowledge.
An untroubled mind,
No longer seeking to consider
What is right and what is wrong,
A mind beyond judgements,
Watches and understands.
Know that the body is a fragile jar,
And make a castle of your mind.
In every trial
Let understanding fight for you
To defend what you have won.
For soon the body is discarded,
Then what does it feel?
A useless log of wood, it lies on the ground,
Then what does it know?
Your worst enemy cannot harm you
As much as your own thoughts, unguarded.
But once mastered,
No one can help you as much,
Not even your father or your mother.

4. Flowers

Who shall conquer this world
And the world of death with all its gods?
Who shall discover
The shining way of dharma?
You shall, even as the man
Who seeks flowers
Finds the most beautiful,
The rarest.
Understand that the body
Is merely the foam of a wave,
The shadow of a shadow.
Snap the flower arrows of desire
And then, unseen,
Escape the king of death.

And travel on.
Death overtakes the man
Who gathers flowers

When with distracted mind and thirsty senses
He searches vainly for happiness
In the pleasures of the world.
Death fetches him away
As a flood carries off a sleeping village.
Death overcomes him
When with distracted mind and thirsty senses
He gathers flowers.
He will never have his fill
Of the pleasures of the world.
The bee gathers nectar from the flower
Without marring its beauty or perfume.
So let the master settle, and wander.
Look to your own faults,
What you have done or left undone.
Overlook the faults of others.
Like a lovely flower,
Bright but scentless,
Are the fine but empty words
Of the man who does not mean what he says.
Like a lovely flower,
Bright and fragrant,
Are the fine and truthful words
Of the man who means what he says.
Like garlands woven from a heap of flowers,
Fashion from your life as many good deeds.
The perfume of sandalwood,
Rosebay or jasmine
Cannot travel against the wind.
But the fragrance of virtue
Travels even against the wind,
As far as the ends of the world.
How much finer
Is the fragrance of virtue
Than of sandalwood, rosebay,
Of the blue lotus or jasmine!
The fragrance of sandalwood and rosebay
Does not travel far.
But the fragrance of virtue
Rises to the heavens.
Desire never crosses the path
Of virtuous and wakeful men.
Their brightness sets them free.
How sweetly the lotus grows
In the litter of the wayside.
Its pure fragrance delights the heart.
Follow the awakened
And from among the blind
The light of your wisdom
Will shine out, purely.

5. The Fool

How long the night to the watchman,
How long the road to the weary traveller,
How long the wandering of many lives
To the fool who misses the way.
If the traveller cannot find
Master or friend to go with him,
Let him travel alone
Rather than with a fool for company.
"My children, my wealth!"
So the fool troubles himself.
But how has he children or wealth?
He is not even his own master.
The fool who knows he is a fool
Is that much wiser.
The fool who thinks he is wise
Is a fool indeed.
Does the spoon taste the soup?
A fool may live all his life
In the company of a master
And still miss the way.
The tongue tastes the soup.
If you are awake in the presence of a master
One moment will show you the way.
The fool is his own enemy.
The mischief is his undoing.
How bitterly he suffers!
Why do what you will regret?
Why bring tears upon yourself?
Do only what you do not regret,
And fill yourself with joy.
For a while the fool's mischief
Tastes sweet, sweet as honey.
Bit in the end it turns bitter.
And how bitterly he suffers!
For months the fool may fast,
Eating from the tip of a grass blade.
Still he is not worth a penny
Beside the master whose food is the way.
Fresh milk takes time to sour.
So a fool's mischief
Takes time to catch up with him.
Like the embers of a fire
It smoulders within him.
Whatever a fool learns,
It only makes him duller.

Knowledge cleaves his head.
For then he wants recognition.
A place before other people,
A place over other people.
"Let them know my work,
Let everyone look to me for direction."
Such are his desires,
Such is his swelling pride.
One way leads to wealth and fame,
The other to the end of the way.
Look not for recognition
But follow the awakened
And set yourself free.

6. The Wise Man

The wise man tells you
Where you have fallen
And where you yet may fall -
Invaluable secrets!
Follow him, follow the way.
Let him chasten and teach you
and keep you from mischief.
The world may hate him.
But good men love him.
Do not look for bad company
Or live with men who do not care.
Find friends who love the truth.
Drink deeply.
Live in serenity and joy.
The wise man delights in the truth
And follows the law of the awakened.
The farmer channels water to his land.
The fletcher whittles his arrows.
And the carpenter turns his wood.
So the wise man directs his mind.
The wind cannot shake a mountain.
Neither praise nor blame moves the
wise man.
He is clarity.
Hearing the truth,
He is like a lake,
Pure and tranquil and deep.
Want nothing.
Where there is desire,
Say nothing.
Happiness or sorrow -
Whatever befalls you,
Walk on
Untouched, unattached.
Do not ask for family or power or
wealth,
Either for yourself or for another.
Can a wise man wish to rise unjustly?
Few cross over the river.
Most are stranded on this side.
On the riverbank they run up and
down.
But the wise man, following the way,
Crosses over, beyond the reach of
death.

He leaves the dark way
For the way of light.
He leaves his home, seeking
Happiness on the hard road.
Free from desire,
Free from possessions,
Free from the dark places of the heart.
Free from attachment and appetite,
Following the seven lights of
awakening,
And rejoicing greatly in his freedom,
In this world the wise man
Becomes himself a light,
Pure, shining, free.

7. The Master

At the end of the way
The master finds freedom
From desire and sorrow -
Freedom without bounds.
Those who awaken
Never rest in one place.
Like swans, they rise
And leave the lake.
On the air they rise
And fly an invisible course,
Gathering nothing, storing nothing.
Their food is knowledge.
They live upon emptiness.
They have seen how to break free.
Who can follow them?
Only the master,
Such is his purity.
Like a bird,
He rises on the limitless air
And flies an invisible course.
He wishes for nothing.
His food is knowledge.
He lives upon emptiness.
He has broken free.
He is the charioteer.
He has tamed his horses,
Pride and the senses.
Even the gods admire him.
Yielding like the earth,

Joyous and clear like the lake,
Still as the stone at the door,
He is free from life and death.
His thoughts are still.
His words are still.
His work is stillness.
He sees his freedom and is free.
The master surrenders his beliefs.
He sees beyond the end and the beginning.
He cuts all ties.
He gives up all desires.
He resists all temptations.
And he rises.
And wherever he lives,
In the city or the country,
In the valley or in the hills,
There is great joy.
Even in the empty forest
He finds joy
Because he wants nothing.

8. The Thousands

Better than a thousand hollow words
Is one word that brings peace.
Better than a thousand hollow verses
Is one verse that brings peace.
Better than a hundred hollow lines
Is one line of the dharma, bringing peace.
It is better to conquer yourself
Than to win a thousand battles.
Then the victory is yours.
It cannot be taken from you,
Not by angels or by demons,
Heaven or hell.
Better than a hundred years of worship,
Better than a thousand offerings,
Better than giving up a thousand worldly ways
In order to win merit,
Better even than tending in the forest
A sacred flame for a hundred years -
Is one moment's reverence
For the man who has conquered himself.
To revere such a man,
A master old in virtue and holiness,
Is to have victory over life itself,
And beauty, strength and happiness.
Better than a hundred years of mischief
Is one day spent in contemplation.
Better than a hundred years of ignorance
Is one day spent in reflection.
Better than a hundred years of idleness
Is one day spent in determination.
Better to live one day
Wondering
How all things arise and pass away.
Better to live one hour
Seeing
The one life beyond the way.
Better to live one moment
In the moment
Of the way beyond the way.

9. Mischief

Be quick to do good.
If you are slow,
The mind, delighting in mischief,
Will catch you.
Turn away from mischief.
Again and again, turn away.
Before sorrow befalls you.
Set your heart on doing good.
Do it over and over again,
And you will be filled with joy.
A fool is happy
Until his mischief turns against him.
And a good man may suffer
Until his goodness flowers.
Do not make light of your failings,
Saying, "What are they to me?"
A jug fills drop by drop.
So the fool becomes brimful of folly.
Do not belittle your virtues,
Saying, "They are nothing."
A jug fills drop by drop.
So the wise man becomes brimful of virtue.
As the rich merchant with few servants
Shuns a dangerous road
And the man who loves life shuns poison,
Beware the dangers of folly and mischief.
For an unwounded hand may handle poison.
The innocent come to no harm.
But as dust thrown against the wind,
Mischief is blown back in the face
Of the fool who wrongs the pure and harmless.

Some are reborn in hell,
Some in this world,
The good in heaven.
But the pure are not reborn.
Nowhere!
Not in the sky,
Nor in the midst of the sea,
Nor deep in the mountains,
Can you hide from your own mischief.
Not in the sky,
Not in the midst of the ocean,
Nor deep in the mountains,
Nowhere
Can you hide from your own death.

10. Violence

All beings tremble before violence.
All fear death.
All love life.
See yourself in other.
Then whom can you hurt?
What harm can you do?
He who seeks happiness
By hurting those who seek happiness
Will never find happiness.
For your brother is like you.
He wants to be happy.
Never harm him
And when you leave this life
You too will find happiness.
Never speak harsh words
For they will rebound upon you.
Angry words hurt
And the hurt rebounds.
Like a broken gong
Be still, and silent.
Know the stillness of freedom
Where there is no more striving.
Like herdsmen driving their cows into the fields,
Old age and death will drive you before them.
But the fool in his mischief forgets
And he lights the fire
Wherein one day he must burn.
He who harms the harmless
Or hurts the innocent,
Ten times shall he fall -
Into torment or infirmity,
Injury or disease or madness,
Persecution or fearful accusation,
Loss of family, loss of fortune.
Fire from heaven shall strike his house
And when his body has been struck down,
He shall rise in hell.
He who goes naked,
With matted hair, mud bespattered,
Who fasts and sleeps on the ground
And smears his body with ashes
And sits in endless meditation -
So long as he is not free from doubts,
He will not find freedom.
But he who lives purely and self-assured,
In quietness and virtue,
Who is without harm or hurt or blame,
Even if he wears fine clothes,
So long as he also has faith,
He is a true seeker.
A noble horse rarely
Feels the touch of the whip.
Who is there in this world as blameless?
Then like a noble horse
Smart under the whip.
Burn and be swift.
Believe, meditate, see.
Be harmless, be blameless.
Awake to the dharma.
And from all sorrows free yourself.
The farmer channels water to his land.
The fletcher whittles his arrows.
The carpenter turns his wood.
And the wise man masters himself.

11. Old Age

The world is on fire!
And you are laughing?
You are deep in the dark.
Will you not ask for a light?
For behold your body -
A painted puppet, a toy,
Jointed and sick and full of false imaginings,
A shadow that shifts and fades.
How frail it is!
Frail and pestilent,
It sickens, festers and dies.
Like every living thing
In the end it sickens and dies.
Behold these whitened bones,
The hollow shells and husks of a dying summer.
And you are laughing?
You are a house of bones,

Flesh and blood for plaster.
Pride lives in you,
And hypocrisy, decay, and death.
The glorious chariots of kings shatter.
So also the body turns to dust.
But the spirit of purity is changeless
And so the pure instruct the pure.
The ignorant man is an ox.
He grows in size, not in wisdom.
"Vainly I sought the builder of my house
Through countless lives.
I could not find him...
How hard it is to tread life after life!
"But now I see you, O builder!
And never again shall you build my house.
I have snapped the rafters,
Split the ridge-pole
And beaten out desire.
And now my mind is free."
There are no fish in the lake.
The long-legged cranes stand in the water.
Sad is the man who in his youth
Loved loosely and squandered his fortune -
Sad as a broken bow,
And sadly is he sighing
After all that has arisen and has passed away.

12. Yourself

Love yourself and watch -
Today, tomorrow, always.
First establish yourself in the way,
Then teach,
And so defeat sorrow.
To straighten the crooked
You must first do a harder thing -
Straighten yourself.
You are your only master.
Who else?
Subdue yourself,
And discover your master.
Wilfully you have fed
Your own mischief.
Soon it will crush you
As the diamond crushes stone.
By your own folly
You will be brought as low
As you worst enemy wishes.
So the creeper chokes the tree.
How hard it is to serve yourself,
How easy to lose yourself
In mischief and folly.
The kashta reed dies when it bears fruit.
So the fool,
Scorning the teachings of the awakened,
Spurning those who follow the dharma,
Perishes when his folly flowers.
Mischief is yours.
Sorrow is yours.
But virtue is also yours,
And purity.
You are the source
Of all purity and impurity.
No one purifies another.
Never neglect your work
For another's,
However great his need.
Your work is to discover your work
And then with all your heart
To give yourself to it.

13. The World

Do not live in the world,
In distraction and false dreams.
Outside the dharma.
Arise and watch.
Follow the way joyfully
Through this world and beyond.
Follow the way of virtue.
Follow the way joyfully
Through this world and on beyond!
For consider the world -
A bubble, a mirage.
See the world as it is,
And death shall overlook you.
Come, consider the world,
A painted chariot for kings,
A trap for fools.
But he who sees goes free.
As the moon slips from behind a cloud
And shines,
So the master comes out from behind his ignorance
And shines.
The world is in darkness.
How few have eyes to see!
How few the birds
Who escape the net and fly to heaven!
Swans rise and fly toward the sun.

What magic!
So do the pure conquer the armies of illusion
And rise and fly.
If you scoff at heaven
And violate the dharma,
If your words are lies,
Where will your mischief end?
The fool laughs at generosity.
The miser cannot enter heaven.
But the master finds joy in giving
And happiness is his reward.
And more -
For greater than all the joys
Of heaven and earth,
Greater still and than dominion
Over all the worlds,
Is the joy of reaching the stream.

14. The Man Who Is Awake

He is awake.
The victory is his.
He has conquered the world.
How can he lose the way
Who is beyond the way?
His eye is open
His foot is free.
Who can follow after him?
The world cannot reclaim him
Or lead him astray,
Nor can the poisoned net of desire hold him.
He is awake!
The gods watch over him.
He is awake
And finds joy in the stillness of meditation
And in the sweetness of surrender.
Hard it is to be born,
Hard it is to live,
Harder still to hear of the way,
And hard to rise, follow, and awake.
Yet the reaching is simple.
Do what is right.
Be pure.
At the end of the way is freedom.
Till then, patience.
If you wound or grieve another,
You have not learned detachment.
Offend in neither word nor deed.
Eat with moderation.
Live in your heart.
Seek the highest consciousness.
Master yourself according to the dharma.
This is the simple teaching of the awakened.
The rain could turn to gold
And still your thirst would not be slaked.
Desire is unquenchable
Or it ends in tears, even in heaven.
He who wishes to awake
Consumes his desires
Joyfully.
In his fear a man may shelter
In mountains or in forests,
In groves of sacred trees or in shrines.
But how can he hide there from his sorrow?
He who shelters in the way
And travels with those who follow it
Comes to see the four great truths.
Concerning sorrow,
The beginning of sorrow,
The eightfold way
And the end of sorrow.
Then at last he is safe.
He has shaken off sorrow.
He is free.
The awakened are few and hard to find.
Happy is the house where a man awakes.
Blessed is his birth.
Blessed is the teaching of the way.
Blessed is the understanding among those who follow it,
And blessed is their determination.
And blessed are those who revere
The man who awakes and follows the way.

They are free from fear.
They are free.
They have crossed over the river of sorrow.

15. Joy

Live in joy,
In love,
Even among those who hate.
Live in joy,
In health,

Even among the afflicted.
Live in joy,
In peace,
Even among the troubled.
Live in joy,
Without possessions.
Like the shining ones.
The winner sows hatred
Because the loser suffers.
Let go of winning and losing
And find joy.
There is no fire like passion,
No crime like hatred,
No sorrow like separation,
No sickness like hunger,
And no joy like the joy of freedom.
Health, contentment and trust
Are your greatest possessions,
And freedom your greatest joy.
Look within.
Be still.
Free from fear and attachment,
Know the sweet joy of the way.
How joyful to look upon the awakened
And to keep company with the wise.
How long the road to the man
Who travels the road with the fool.
But whoever follows those who follow the way
Discovers his family, and is filled with joy.
Follow then the shining ones,
The wise, the awakened, the loving,
For they know how to work and forbear.
Follow them
As the moon follows the path of the stars.

16. Pleasure

Do not let pleasure distract you
From meditation, from the way.
Free yourself from pleasure and pain.
For in craving pleasure or in nursing pain
There is only sorrow.
Like nothing lest you lose it,
Lest it bring you grief and fear.
Go beyond likes and dislikes.

From passion and desire,
Sensuousness and lust,
Arise grief and fear.
Free yourself from attachment.
He is pure, and sees.
He speaks the truth, and lives it.
He does his own work.
So he is admired and loved.
With a determined mind and undesiring heart
He longs for freedom.
He is called uddhamsoto -
"He who goes upstream."
When a traveller at last comes home
From a far journey,
With what gladness
His family and friends receive him!
Even so shall your good deeds
Welcome you like friends
And with what rejoicing
When you pass from one life to the next!

17. Anger

Let go of anger.
Let go of pride.
When you are bound by nothing
You go beyond sorrow.
Anger is like a chariot careering wildly.
He who curbs his anger is the true charioteer.
Others merely hold the reins.
With gentleness overcome anger.
With generosity overcome meanness.
With truth overcome deceit.
Speak the truth.
Give whenever you can,
Never be angry.
These three steps will lead you
Into the presence of the gods.
The wise harm no one.
They are masters of their bodies
And they go to the boundless country.
They go beyond sorrow.
Those who seek perfection
Keep watch day and night
Till all desires vanish.
Listen, Atula. This is not new,
It is an old saying -
"They blame you for being silent,
They blame you when you talk too much
And when you talk too little."
Whatever you do, they blame you.
The world always finds
A way to praise and a way to blame.

It always has and it always will.
But who dares blame the man
Whom the wise continually praise,
Whose life is virtuous and wise,
Who shines like a coin of pure gold?
Even the gods praise him.
Even Brahma praises him.
Beware of the anger of the body.
Master the body.
Let it serve truth.
Beware of the anger of the mouth.
Master your words.
Let them serve truth.
Beware of the anger of the mind.
Master your thoughts.
Let them serve truth.
The wise have mastered
Body, word and mind.
They are the true masters.

18. Impurity

You are as the yellow leaf.
The messengers of death are at hand.
You are to travel far away.
What will you take with you?
You are the lamp
To lighten the way.
Then hurry, hurry.
When your light shines
Without impurity of desire
You will come into the boundless country.
Your life is falling away.
Death is at hand.
Where will you rest on the way?
What have you taken with you?
You are the lamp
To lighten the way.
Then hurry, hurry.
When you light shines purely
You will not be born
And you will not die.
As a silversmith sifts dust from silver,
Remove your own impurities
Little by little.
Or as iron is corroded by rust
Your own mischief will consume you.
Neglected, the sacred verses rust.
For beauty rusts without use
And unrepaired the house falls into ruin,
And the watch, without vigilance, fails.
In this world and the next
There is impurity and impurity:
When a woman lacks dignity,
When a man lacks generosity.
But the greatest impurity is ignorance.
Free yourself from it.
Be pure.
Life is easy
For the man who is without shame,
Impudent as a crow,
A vicious gossip,
Vain, meddlesome, dissolute.
But life is hard
For the man who quietly undertakes
The way of perfection,
With purity, detachment and vigour.
He sees light.
If you kill, lie or steal,
Commit adultery or drink,
You dig up your own roots.
And if you cannot master yourself,
The harm you do turns against you
Grievously.
You may give in the spirit of light
Or as you please,
But if you care how another man gives
Or how he withholds,
You trouble your quietness endlessly.
These envying roots!
Destroy them
And enjoy a lasting quietness.
There is no fire like passion.
There are no chains like hate.
Illusion is a net,
Desire is a rushing river.
How easy it is to see your brother's faults,
How hard it is to face your own.
You winnow his in the wind like chaff,
But yours you hide,
Like a cheat covering up an unlucky throw.
Dwelling on your brother's faults
Multiplies your own.
You are far from the end of your journey.
The way is not in the sky.
The way is in the heart.
See how you love
Whatever keeps you from your journey.
But the tathagathas,
"They who have gone beyond,"
Have conquered the world.
They are free.

The way is not in the sky.
The way is in the heart.

All things arise and pass away.
But the awakened awake forever.

19. The Just

If you determine your course
With force or speed,
You miss the way of the dharma.
Quietly consider
What is right and what is wrong.
Receiving all opinions equally,
Without haste, wisely,
Observe the dharma.
Who is wise,
The eloquent or the quiet man?
Be quiet,
And loving and fearless.
For the mind talks.
But the body knows.
Gray hairs do not make a master.
A man may grow old in vain.
The true master lives in truth,
In goodness and restraint,
Non-violence, moderation and purity.
Fine words or fine features
Cannot make a master
Out of a jealous and greedy man.
Only when envy and selfishness
Are rooted out of him
May he grow in beauty.
A man may shave his head
But if he still lies and neglects his work,
If he clings to desire and attachment,
How can he follow the way?

The true seeker
Subdues all waywardness.
He has submitted his nature to quietness.
He is a true seeker
Not because he begs
But because he follows the lawful way,
Holding back nothing, holding to nothing,
Beyond good and evil,
Beyond the body and beyond the mind.
Silence cannot make a master out of a fool.
But he who weighs only purity in his scales,
Who sees the nature of the two worlds,
He is a master.
He harms no living thing.
And yet it is not good conduct
That helps you upon the way,
Nor ritual, nor book learning,
Nor withdrawal into the self,
Nor deep meditation.
None of these confers mastery or joy.
O seeker!
Rely on nothing
Until you want nothing.

20. The Way

The way is eightfold.
There are four truths.
All virtue lies in detachment.
The master has an open eye.
This is the only way,
The only way to the opening of the eye.
Follow it.
Outwit desire.
Follow it to the end of sorrow.
When I pulled out sorrow's shaft
I showed you the way.
It is you who must make the effort.
The masters only point the way.
But if you meditate
And follow the dharma
You will free yourself from desire.
"Everything arises and passes away."
When you see this, you are above sorrow.
This is the shining way.
"Existence is sorrow."
Understand, and go beyond sorrow.
This is the way of brightness.
"Existence is illusion."
Understand, and go beyond.
This is the way of clarity.
You are strong, you are young.
It is time to arise.
So arise!
Lest through irresolution and idleness
You lose the way.
Master your words.
Master your thoughts.
Never allow your body to do harm.
Follow these three roads with purity
And you will find yourself upon the one way,

The way of wisdom.
Sit in the world, sit in the dark.
Sit in meditation, sit in light.
Choose your seat.
Let wisdom grow.
Cut down the forest.
Not the tree.
For out of the forest comes danger.
Cut down the forest.
Fell desire.
And set yourself free.
While a man desires a woman,
His mind is bound
As closely as a calf to its mother.
As you would pluck an autumn lily,
Pluck the arrow of desire.
For he who is awake
Has shown you the way of peace.
Give yourself to the journey.
"Here shall I make my dwelling,
In the summer and the winter,
And in the rainy season."
So the fool makes his plans,
Sparing not a thought for his death.
Death overtakes the man
Who, giddy and distracted by the world,
Cares only for his flocks and his children,
Death fetches him away
As a flood carries off a sleeping village.

His family cannot save him,
Not his father nor his sons.
Know this.
Seek wisdom, and purity.
Quickly clear the way.

21. Out Of The Forest

There is pleasure
And there is bliss.
Forgo the first to possess the second.
If you are happy
At the expense of another man's happiness,
You are forever bound.
You do not what you should.
You do what you should not.
You are reckless, and desire grows.
But the master is wakeful.
He watches his body.
In all his actions he discriminates,
And he becomes pure.
He is without blame
Though once he may have murdered
His mother and his father,
Two kings, a kingdom, and all its subjects.
Though the kings were holy
And their subjects among the virtuous,
Yet he is blameless.
The followers of the awakened
Awake
And day and night they watch
And meditate upon their master.
Forever wakeful,
They mind the dharma.
They know their brothers on the way.
They understand the mystery of the body.
They find joy in all beings.
They delight in meditation.
It is hard to live in the world
And hard to live out of it.
It is hard to be among the many.
And for the wanderer, how long is the road
Wandering through many lives!
Let him rest.
Let him not suffer.
Let him not fall into suffering.
If he is a good man,
A man of faith, honoured and prosperous,
Wherever he goes he is welcome.
Like the Himalayas
Good men shine from afar.
But bad men move unseen
Like arrows in the night.
Sit.
Rest.
Work.
Alone with yourself,
Never weary.

On the edge of the forest
Live joyfully,
Without desire.

22. The Dark

One man denies the truth.
Another denies his own actions.
Both go into the dark.
And in the next world suffer
For they offend truth.
Wear the yellow robe.

But if you are reckless
You will fall into darkness.
If you are reckless,
Better to swallow molten iron
Than eat at the table of the good folk.
If you court another man's wife
You court trouble.
Your sleep is broken.
You lose our honour.
You fall into darkness.
You go against the law,
You go into the dark.
Your pleasures end in fear
And the king's punishment is harsh.
But as a blade of grass held awkwardly
May cut your hand,
So renunciation may lead you into the dark.
For if in your renunciation
You are reckless and break your word,
If your purpose wavers,
You will not find the light.
Do what you have to do
Resolutely, with all your heart.
The traveller who hesitates
Only raises dust on the road.
It is better to do nothing
Than to do what is wrong.
For whatever you do, you do to yourself.
Like a border town well guarded,
Guard yourself within and without.
Let not a single moment pass
Lest you fall into darkness.
Feel shame only where shame is due.
Fear only what is fearful.
See evil only in what is evil.
Lest you mistake the true way
And fall into darkness.
See what is.
See what is not.
Follow the true way.
Rise.

23. The Elephant

I shall endure harsh words
As the elephant endures the shafts of battle.
For many people speak wildly.
The tamed elephant goes to battle.
The king rides him.
The tamed man is the master.
He can endure hard words in peace.
Better than a mule
Or the fine horses of Sindh
Or mighty elephants of war
Is the man who had mastered himself.
Not on their backs
Can he reach the untrodden country.
But only on his own.
The mighty elephant Dhanapalaka
Is wild when he is in rut,
And when bound he will not eat,
Remembering the elephant grove.
The fool is idle.
He eats and he rolls in his sleep
Like a hog in a sty.
And he has to live life over again.
"My own mind used to wander
Wherever pleasure or desire or lust led it.
But now I have it tamed,
I guide it,
As the keeper guides the wild elephant."
Awake.
Be the witness of your thoughts.
The elephant hauls himself from the mud.
In the same way drag yourself out of your sloth.
If the traveller can find
A virtuous and wise companion
Let him go with him joyfully
And overcome the dangers of the way.
But if you cannot find
Friend or master to go with you,
Travel on alone -
Like a king who has given away his kingdom,
Like an elephant in the forest.
Travel on alone,
Rather than with a fool for company.
Do not carry with you your mistakes.
Do not carry your cares.
Travel on alone.
Like an elephant in the forest.
To have friends in need is sweet
And to share happiness.
And to have done something good
Before leaving this life is sweet,
And to let go of sorrow.
To be a mother is sweet,
And a father.
It is sweet to live arduously,
And to master yourself.
O how sweet it is to enjoy life,

Living in honesty and strength!
And wisdom is sweet,
And freedom.

24. Desire

If you sleep,
Desire grows in you
Like a vine in the forest.
Like a monkey in the forest
You jump from tree to tree,
Never finding the fruit -
From life to life,
Never finding peace.
If you are filled with desire
Your sorrows swell
Like the grass after the rain.
But if you subdue desire
Your sorrows shall fall from you
Like drops of water from a lotus flower.
This is good counsel
And it is for everyone:
As the grass is cleared for the fresh root,
Cut down desire
Lest death after death crush you
As a river crushes the helpless reeds.
For if the roots hold firm,
A felled tree grows up again.
If desires are not uprooted,
Sorrows grow again in you.
Thirty-six streams are rushing toward you!
Desire and pleasure and lust...
Play in your imagination with them
And they will sweep you away.
Powerful streams!
They flow everywhere.
Strong vine!
If you see it spring up,
Take care!
Pull it out by the roots.
Pleasures flow everywhere.
You float upon them
And are carried from life to life.
Like a hunted hare you run,
The pursuer of desire pursued,
Harried from life to life.
O seeker!
Give up desire,
Shake off your chains.
You have come out of the hollow
Into the clearing.
The clearing is empty.
Why do you rush back into the hollow?
Desire is a hollow
And people say "Look!
He was free.
But now he gives up his freedom."
It is not iron that imprisons you
Nor rope nor wood,
But the pleasure you take in gold and jewels,
In sons and wives.
Soft fetters,
Yet they hold you down.
Can you snap them?
There are those who can,
Who surrender to the world,
Forsake desire, and follow the way.
O slave of desire,
Float upon the stream.
Little spider, stick to your web.
Or else abandon your sorrows for the way.
Abandon yesterday, and tomorrow,
And today.
Cross over to the father shore,
Beyond life and death.
Do your thoughts trouble you?
Does passion disturb you?
Beware of this thirstiness
Lest your wishes become desires
And desire binds you.
Quieten your mind.
Reflect.
Watch.
Nothing binds you.
You are free.
You are strong.
You have come to the end.
Free from passion and desire,
You have stripped the thorns from the stem.
This is your last body.
You are wise.
You are free from desire
And you understand words
And the stitching together of words.
And you want nothing.
"Victory is mine,
Knowledge is mine,
And all purity,
All surrender.

"I want nothing.
I am free.

I found my way.
What shall I call Teacher?
The gift of truth is beyond giving.
The taste beyond sweetness,
The joy beyond joy.
The end of desire is the end of sorrow.
The fool is his own enemy.
Seeking wealth, he destroys himself.
Seek rather the other shore.
Weeds choke the field.
Passion poisons the nature of man,
And hatred, illusion, and desire.
Honour the man who is without passion,
Hatred, illusion, and desire.

What you give to him
Will be given back to you,
And more.

25. The Seeker

Master your senses,
What you taste and smell,
What you see, what you hear.
In all things be a master
Of what you do and say and think.
Be free.
You are a seeker.
Delight in the mastery
Of your hands and your feet,
Of your words and your thoughts.
Delight in meditation
And in solitude.
Compose yourself, be happy.
You are a seeker.
Hold your tongue.
Do not exalt yourself
But lighten the way
For your words are sweet.
Follow the truth of the way.
Reflect upon it.
Make it your own.
Live it.
It will always sustain you.
Do not turn away what is given you
Not reach out for what is given to others,
Lest you disturb your quietness.
Give thanks
For what had been given to you,
However little.
Be pure, never falter.
You have no name and no form.
Why miss what you do not have?
The seeker is not sorry.
Love and joyfully
Follow the way,
The quiet way to the happy country.
Seeker!
Empty the boat,
Lighten the load,
Passion and desire and hatred.
And sail swiftly.
There are five at the door
To turn away, and five more,
And there are five to welcome in.
And when five§ have been left
Stranded on the shore,
The seeker is called oghatinnoti -
"He who has crossed over."
Seeker!
Do not be restless.
Meditate constantly.
Or you will swallow fire
And cry out: "No more!"
If you are not wise,
How can you steady the mind?
If you cannot quieten yourself,
What will you ever learn?
How will you become free?
With a quiet mind
Come into that empty house, your heart,
And feel the joy of the way
Beyond the world.
Look within -
The rising and the falling.
What happiness!
How sweet to be free!
It is the beginning of life,
Of mastery and patience,
Of good friends along the way,
Of a pure and active life.
So life in love.
Do your work.
Make an end of sorrow.
For see how the jasmine
Releases and lets fall
Its withered flowers.
Let fall wilfulness and hatred.
Are you quiet?
Quieten your body.
Quieten your mind.
You want nothing.
Your words are still.
You are still.
By your own efforts

Waken yourself, watch yourself.
And live joyfully.
You are the master,
You are the refuge.
As a merchant breaks in a fine horse,
Master yourself.
How gladly you follow
The words of the awakened.
How quietly, how surely
You approach the happy country,
The heart of stillness.
However young,
The seeker who sets out upon the way
Shines bright over the world.
Like the moon,
Come out from behind the clouds!
Shine.

26. The True Master

Wanting nothing
With all your heart
Stop the stream.
When the world dissolves
Everything becomes clear.
Go beyond
This way or that way,
To the farther shore
Where the world dissolves
And everything becomes clear.
Beyond this shore
And the father shore,
Beyond the beyond,
Where there is no beginning,
No end.
Without fear, go.
Meditate.
Live purely.
Be quiet.
Do your work, with mastery.
By day the sun shines,
And the warrior in his armour shines.
By night the moon shines,
And the master shines in meditation.
But this day and night
The man who is awake
Shines in the radiance of the spirit.
A master gives up mischief.
He is serene.
He leaves everything behind him
He does not take offence
And he does not give it.
He never returns evil for evil.
Alas for the man
Who raises his hand against another,
And even more for him
Who returns the blow.
Resist the pleasures of life
And the desire to hurt -
Till sorrows vanish.
Never offend
By what you think or say or do.
Honour the man who is awake
And shows you the way.
Honour the fire of his sacrifice.
Matted hair or family or caste
Do not make a master
But the truth and goodness
With which he is blessed.
Your hair is tangled
And you sit on a deerskin.
What folly!
When inside you are ragged with lust.
The master's clothes are in tatters.
His veins stand out,
He is wasting away.
Alone in the forest
He sits and meditates.
A man is not born to mastery.
A master is never proud.
He does not talk down to others.
Owning nothing, he misses nothing.
He is not afraid.
He does not tremble.
Nothing binds him.
He is infinitely free.
So cut through
The strap and the thong and the rope.
Loosen the fastenings.
Unbolt the doors of sleep
And awake.
The master endures
Insults and ill treatment
Without reacting.
For his spirit is an army.
He is never angry.
He keeps his promises.
He never strays, he is determined.
This body is my last, he says!
Like water on the leaf of a lotus flower
Or a mustard seed on the point of a
needle,
He does not cling.
For he has reached the end of sorrow
And has laid down his burden.
He looks deeply into things
And sees their nature.
He discriminates

And reaches the end of the way.
He does not linger
With those who have a home
Nor with those who stray.
Wanting nothing,
He travels on alone.
He hurts nothing.
He never kills.
He moves with love among the unloving,
With peace and detachment
Among the hungry and querulous.
Like a mustard seed from the point of a needle
Hatred has fallen from him,
And lust, hypocrisy and pride.
He offends no one.
Yet he speaks the truth.
His words are clear
But never harsh.
Whatever is not his
He refuses,
Good or bad, great or small.
He wants nothing from this world
And nothing from the next.
He is free.
Desiring nothing, doubting nothing,
Beyond judgement and sorrow
And the pleasures of the senses,
He had moved beyond time.
He is pure and free.
How clear he is.
He is the moon.
He is serene.
He shines.
For he has travelled
Life after life
The muddy and treacherous road of illusion.
He does not tremble
Or grasp or hesitate.
He has found peace.
Calmly
He lets go of life,
Or home and pleasure and desire.
Nothing of men can hold him.
Nothing of the gods can hold him.
Nothing in all creation can hold him.
Desire has left him,
Never to return.
Sorrow has left him,
Never to return.
He is calm.
In him the seed of renewing life
Had been consumed.
He has conquered all the inner worlds.
With dispassionate eye
He sees everywhere
The falling and the uprising.
And with great gladness
He knows that he has finished.
He has woken from his sleep.
And the way he has taken
Is hidden from men,
Even from spirits and gods,
By virtue of his purity.

In him there in no yesterday,
No tomorrow,
No today.
Possessing nothing,
Wanting nothing.
He is full of power.
Fearless, wise, exalted.
He has vanquished all things.
He sees by virtue of his purity.
He has come to the end of the way,
Over the river of his many lives,
His many deaths.
Beyond the sorrow of hell,
Beyond the great joy of heaven,
By virtue of his purity.
He has come to the end of the way.
All that he had to do, he has done.
And now he is one.